ORIENTAL BIRD CLUB

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THE ORIENTAL BIRD CLUB aims to:

* encourage an interest in the birds of the Oriental region and their conservation.
* liaise with and promote the work of existing regional societies.
* collate and publish material on Oriental birds.

Two bulletins and a journal, Forktail, are published annually.

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The Oriental region lies mainly between 68° and 135°E, and between 10°S and 32°N. It is bounded on the west by the Indus River in Pakistan, and in the north by the Himalaya and an imprecise line in China roughly coinciding with the basin of the Yangtze Kiang. Southwards it includes the Indian subcontinent, south-east Asia, 2aiwan, the Philippines, and most of Indonesia. The eastern limit is defined by Lydekker's line, beyond which very few oriental species extend. The area between this line and Wallace's line, which marks the westward extension of Australasian forms, contains a mixture of species from both faunal regions. It is referred to as Wallacea. Because of the imprecise boundaries with the Palearctic region in Pakistan and China, the OBC is interested in material for the whole of these two countries. However, in the Club's publications the emphasis will be on the core area of the Oriental region.

Editorial

A number of problems in the preparation of Bulletin 5 has meant that we were unable to send it out until halfway through the year. We apologize for this delay.

From now on we intend that each issue of the bulletin will carry a feature on lesser-known species in the Oriental region. In this one Richard Grimmett presents a short account of Sind Sparrow Passer pyrrhonotus, a species almost endemic to Pakistan. Clearly, anybody who feels that they have sufficient experience of a bird about which little is known - either owing to its behaviour or the restricted nature of its range - and would like to write an article for OBC, then we would be pleased to hear from them.

A further word of request: currently, we hold a number of Birdwatching area articles (like that on Islamabad by Mark Mallalieu in this issue), but have little material on identification problems, conservation issues, research programmes etc. While we are delighted to receive any material, if those wishing to contribute could prepare articles of the latter kind, then their chances of speedier publication are much greater. Similarly, the five bulletins have shown a bias towards the Indian Subcontinent, particularly India itself, China, and Indonesia. An article concerning the birds of Taiwan, and Philippines, Malaysia, Viet Nam, Bangladesh or Bhutan - in fact, any regon which receives little exposure - would be doubly welcome.

As always the preparation of the bulletin has been a joint effort by the editorial panel, Helen Taylor, and myself. We would like to thank all contributors, particularly three artists - Craig Robson, Dave Showler, and Gary Wright. A special vote of thanks goes to the International Council for Bird Preservation, which has helped us in numerous ways since the Club's inception in 1984. This year we are pleased to be able to offer our assistance to ICBP in their current promotion campaign. A leaflet, providing details of membership and the Council's conservation work, is enclosed with the bulletin. We also enclose a form for British Birds, whose subscription, as last year, is available at a reduced rate to OBC members. Finally, I would also like to thank Jacqui Bellamy and the Conservation Monitoring Centre, without whose joint assistance this bulletin would not have been possible.

Club News

August Meeting in Norfolk

OBC is holding its next meeting on the north Norfolk coast on Saturday 22 August starting at 19h30 in the Blakeney Village Hall. The programme includes an illustrated talk on the China Cranewatch expedition and a quiz. Food and

drink will be available. If you need more details please contact Sally or Gary Allport (14 Harford Manor, Norwich, Great Britain NR2 2LW; Tel. no. 0603 505531).

OBC Meeting on Isles of Scilly

To spread the word about OBC, the Club is holding a meeting on the Isles of Scilly (a very popular spot for birdwatchers). The meeting will be at the Porthcressa restaurant, Hugh Town, St Mary's, on Sunday 18 October, starting after the log at 21h30. The programme will include an introduction to the Club, a mystery birdslide competition (vagrants and potential vagrants to Europe from the Oriental region) and a raffle. About 1000 birdwatchers may be on the islands at this time (more than OBC's total membership) - so it is a good chance to let more people know about the Club.

Third Annual Meeting

OBC's third AGM will be held on Saturday 12 December in London. The venue will be announced in the Autumn bulletin, but we are hoping to find somewhere larger and more confortable than the Finsbury Library. The provisional programme includes an illustrated talk on the birds of Java by Paul Andrew and we hope to have Dr Steven Landfried over from the USA to show his film on Cranes Gruidae and crane catching in Pakistan. There will also be an update on ICBP's conservation work for Gurney's Pitta Pitta gurneyi. See the next bulletin for full details.

New T-shirt Features Gurney's Pitta

Last year's hornbill T-shirt was a great success raising over £175 for the conservation fund. Only a few small sizes still remain which can be ordered using OBC sales order form.

This year we have decided to produce a new design. The search for and rediscovery of Gurney's Pitta coincided with the formation of OBC, and the Club is helping with the conservation programme for the species. Gurney's Pitta is still in grave danger of extinction and, as such, epitomises the threats that forest destruction poses to many Oriental bird species. The bird is therefore the ideal candidate to feature on our next T-shirt. This placed many constraints on the design, not least of which was the bird having four colours when our budget could only stretch to three. We hope you will like the result which features the Pitta in blue, yellow and black against the leaf of Licula peltata.

Conserving forest habitats will require an element of campaigning, and for this reason the shirt will carry the slogan 'PEOPLE FOR PITTAS'. Four sizes are available: small, medium, large and extra large at £6.50 inc. p&p. The initial print run will be 100 and have we have increased the proportion of large sizes so as not to disappoint some of our members this time. Finally, many thanks to Craig Robson and Adam Davison for producing the design.

Conservation Fund in Action

Funds raised at OBC's 1986 AGM for the conservation of Gurney's Pitta Pitta gurneyi have been given to the International Council for Bird Preservation (ICBP) to support their work for this fascinating bird.

As part of their strategy surveys are being carried out to identify the bird's exact range, as well as those remaining areas of forest which support it. ICBP is also getting underway detailed studies of the species' breeding ecology and habitat requirements, and will be producing management plans for the areas where the bird is located.

Supporting this project is an exciting beginning for OBC's Conservation Fund - especially as the Club has mustered more than financial help. Four OBC members are now in Thailand carrying out fieldwork and so far ten new pairs of Gurney's Pitta have been found.

ICBP's work for Gurney's Pitta is being coordinated by Phil Round and Uthai Treesucon at the Centre for Wildlife Research, Mahidol University, Rama VI Road, Bangkok 10400, Thailand and by Mike Rands at ICBP, 219c Huntingdon Road, Cambridge, UK.

Report on Second AGM

The second OBC AGM was held in the Finsbury Library, London on Saturday 13 December 1986. Once again, there was a complement of three lectures, the day's events being started off by Tom Roberts. His interesting account of Pakistan's birds and mammals was followed with a portrait, by Andy Clements, of the little-known Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan.

A mid-afternoon break for a buffet tea and informal conversation provided an opportunity to organize a raffle, the proceeds of which - a total of £250 - were donated to ICBP's project on Gurney's Pitta Pitta gurneyi. A series of prizes (including a year's subscription to the magazine, British Birds, kindly donated by Tim Sharrock) was awarded to four winners by the Club's Journal editor, Nigel Collar. The Chairman, Treasurer, and Secretary then gave their joint address to the meeting and informed members of the Club's progress in 1986.

The last talk of the afternoon was prefaced by Derek Scott's brief overview of the Asian Wetland Survey organized by IUCN, ICBP, and IWRB, while Dr Collar gave us an impromptu and tantalizing glimpse of some of Asia's rarest birds, including Okinawa Rail Rallus okinawae and Gurney's Pitta. Finally, Charlie Williams, a member of a Southampton University expedition to Ladakh, concluded the day's events with his superb slides of this remote western-Himalayan region.

All in all this was a brisk, well-attended meeting, filled, almost to capacity, with talks and images of the Orient and its birds.

BNHS Seminar Honours Salim Ali

Thanks to a grant from the US Fish and Wildlife Service, I was able to attend a seminar organized by the Bombay Natural History Society to celebrate the 90th birthday of Asia's most remarkable ornithologist, Dr Salim Ali. Working sessions took place on 10 and 11 November, followed on 12 November by a general meeting to greet Salim Ali himself, and share his birthday cake.

The papers were presented to an invited audience of BNHS members, government officers, university researchers and overseas scientists, by the BNHS project teams. They covered most aspects of fieldwork being undertaken by the Society: the ecological studies at Bharatpur, the Endangered Species Project (concentrating on elephants Elephas, bustards Otidae, Jerdon's Courser Cursorius bitorquatus, and Black-necked Cranes Grus nigricollis) and the Bird Migration Study. It was particularly pleasing to see photographs of Jerdon's Courser, the fourth sighted so far, crouching under a shrub and relying on its cryptic plumage to evade detection. The resulting discussions were lively and productive, with most attention being paid to the rapidly deteriorating situation of the wetlands at Bharatpur and possible methods of reversing their decline. BNHS hopes to publish the proceedings of the seminar in due course as a special volume of the Journal.

Salim Ali, as always, accepted the tributes showered on him with great charm and modesty. As President of BNHS, he took the opportunity to look at the future of the Society, and the need to tackle even more vigorously the pressing conservation problems India is facing. In this respect it is rather unfortunate that the BNHS seems constrained in its activities by a tangle of federal and state regulations which inhibit the introduction of modern field study methods such as radio-tracking.

(Contributed by Paul Goriup)

New Giro Account

Following problems experienced recently with our Giro account (as reported in Bulletin 4), the Club now has a new Giro account. Please note that all future payments by Giro should be to account number: 35 234 1904.

Indian Bank Account now Open

After months of negotiation, we are pleased to announce that the Club has at last opened a bank account in India. Members living in India can now pay their subscriptions in rupees direct into this account. Full details are as follows:
Bank: Grindlays Bank plc, 90 Mahatma Gandhi Road, Post Box 141, Bombay 400 001.
Account name: Oriental Bird Club
Account no.: 11155-2

When remitting funds for credit to this account, it is essential that members also inform the Club (in the UK) how much they have paid and what it is for. Subscription rates in rupees at current rates of exchange (£1 = 21 Rupees approx) are 125 Rs (Ordinary rate) and 105 Rs (Reduced rate for members belonging to other Oriental ornithological or natural history societies).

US Bank Account now Open

The Club has recently opened a bank account in the United States, to be maintained by the Club's US representative, Robert Kennedy. To save on bank charges, North American members can now send membership dues direct to him at the following address:

Oriental Bird Club, c/o Dr Robert S. Kennedy, Cincinnati Museum of

Natural History, 1720 Gilbert Avenue, Cincinnati, OHIO 45202

Checks should be made payable to the Oriental Bird Club. The current subscription rates are US $10 (individual member) and US $20 (corporate member).

Report on Netherlands Meeting

The Winter Meeting, held on 21 February 1987, at Leiden, Holland, convened in the Rijksmuseum at 1100 hrs, with about 20 local members and a similar number arriving from Britain. As was appropriate at a meeting held in the Netherlands, three of the talks were centred on Indonesia and its birds. Arnoud van den Berg opened with a selection of largely unique sound recordings and topical slides, concentrating on the birds of Sulawesi, with some Malaysian species such as Marbled Wren-Babbler Napothera marmorata. This innovative presentation was quite superb. Rene Dekker gave a lucid account of the breeding ecology of the Maleo Macrocephalon maleo, a bird chiefly restricted to the northern peninsula of Sulawesi. The Maleo is severely threatened; it tends to lay at communal sites and the eggs are taken by the local people. Fortunately, conservation measures based on the speaker's recent research work should ensure the species' survival.

After lunch members reassembled to hear Dave Farrow tell of an extraordinary trip across eastern Tibet. A concise account was included in Forktail 2, but it was a pleasure to be presented with personal slides and droll asides on the vagaries of plateau travel.

Frank Rozendaal gave the fourth talk, on the birds of the Sangihe, Talaud and Tanimbar Islands. These islands form part of the eastern rim of the Indonesian Archipelago, and though it was clear that much of the forest on the northern islands had been felled it was encouraging to hear that pockets of the avifauna remained. That these islands had previously been only cursorily explored was illustrated by a slide of Cettia carolinae, a new species collected and described as common on one of the Tanimbar Islands.

It remains to thank the organizers of this meeting, particularly Frank Rozendaal. Not only were all visitors courteously received and accommodated, but presented, by a fortuitous combination of talks, with a delightful day at the cutting edge of Oriental ornithology.

(Contributed by Paul Andrew)

Information on Sri Lanka

John and Judy Banks, who have written about where to watch birds in Sri Lanka Bull. Oriental Bird Club 3:18-22, have asked members to write directly to the OBC Information Service rather than to them for further information on the country.

News and Views

MASSIVE CAPTURE OF BIRDS IN TAIWAN

Ornithologists are calling for action to control the very large number of wild birds which are caught in Taiwan every year. Nets of up to 10 km in length are used, with catching practised even in remote mountainous areas. Species caught include several of Taiwan's endemics such as White-whiskered Laughingthrush Garrulax morrisonianus, Steere's Liocichla Liocichla steerii, White-eared Sibia Heterophasia auricularis, Formosan Yuhina Yuhina brunneiceps and Yellow Tit Parus holsti. Other birds include Black-browed Barbet Megalaima oorti, Green-backed Tit Parus monticolus and Vinaceous Rosefinch Carpodacus vinaceus. It is estimated that more than 2000 birds are caught per day and these are exported to Hong Kong, Japan and Europe.
(Contributed by Lin Chih-Cheng)

RELICT GULL IN CHINA

In autumn 1986, an adult Relict or Central Asian Gull Larus relictus was located by the China Cranewatch 1986 expedition at Beidaihe Haibin on the north-east coast of China. This was followed by a number of birds which were thought to be Relict Gulls in first winter plumage, with a daily maximum of seven recorded. If confirmed, this represents important new information about a species whose migratory and wintering distribution is completely unknown.

The Relict Gull was only confirmed as a distinct species in 1971. Its total world population is probably around 2000 pairs and there are very few records away from its breeding grounds in the USSR and Mongolia. There appear to be only two records from the Oriental region (only one at the coast) which led ornithologist Alan Kitson (Bull. Brit. Orn. Cl. 100:178-184) to suggest that the species winters between Tianjin in the Gulf of Chihli (Bo Hai) - about 300 km south of Beidaihe Haibin - and Vietnam. These recent records support the coastal-wintering theory. Furthermore, there have been no records from Thailand, with its well-watched coastline suggesting that Kitson may well have been right.

STILL NO HOPE FOR HOUBARA

On the 10 March 1987, the National Assembly of Pakistan finally rejected the Houbara Bustard Bill 1985. The rejection of the Bill, moved by Begum Syeda Abida Hussain to put a stop to the hunting and capture of the Houbara Bustard Chlamydotis undulata, followed protracted debate which lasted over a year.

The Houbara Bustard is mainly a winter visitor to Pakistan (there is a small breeding population in Baluchistan) and is the favoured quarry of hunting parties which visit the country from the Middle East. The species is being

considered for inclusion in the Red Data Book by the International Council for Bird Preservation because studies have shown that it has declined so dramatically in the Soviet Union which is the origin of Pakistan's birds. The intensive hunting in Pakistan, with thousands of birds killed each season, is unacceptable whilst its status is so precarious. Yet hunting parties, employing helicopters, radio-tagged falcons (which are used to catch the birds), radar equipment and convoys of jeeps scoured the Baluchistan deserts again during the winter of 1986/87. The desert environment is devastated in the wake of these parties and other creatures are shot for food or target practice.

As disturbing, was the news that the exploitation of the Houbara took on a new dimension in the spring of 1986, with eggs and young (reputedly 16 chicks and up to 10 eggs) taken for captive breeding in the Middle East. This is likely to have devastated the small breeding population in Baluchistan (the total number of breeding birds is unknown). With massive rewards offered to local people ($500-$1000) and the collecting planned again for this spring there are likely to be few, if any, breeding birds left in the country.

Houbara Bustard Chlamydotis undulata (drawing by Richard Grimmett)

There is little chance that this exploitation can be stopped since the Pakistan Government has its hands tied. The Arab dignatories responsible are massive aid donors to Pakistan, while hundreds of thousands of Pakistanis work in

the Middle East. Both these benefits would be in jeopardy if the Arab's favourite pastime were banned. There is therefore, despite opposition raised at the highest levels, still no hope for the Houbara.

BIRD PARADISE UNDER THREAT

Dihaila Jheel, described as an unknown bird paradise by the Bombay Natural History Society, may well be threatened. The Jheel, which is highly dependent on the monsoon, is included in the Karera Bustard Sanctuary in the Shivpuri district of Madhya Pradesh. When flooded, internationally important numbers of ducks and waders occur, mainly Northern Pintail Anas acuta, Common Teal A. crecca, Ruff Philomachus pugnax, and Little Stint Calidris minuta. Having 'discovered' the site in 1982, the BNHS believes that the current changes in land-use now threaten its existence. The BNHS is proposing the acquisition of the land, together with its development as a bird sanctuary, and its designation as a Ramsar Site. India is a contracting party to the Ramsar Convention (Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat) but, disappointingly, has only put forward two sites for international recognition and special protection. The adoption of BNHS' recommendations would enable others to witness this 'bird paradise' and would also confirm the Indian Government's commitment to the Convention and wise use of wetlands.

TAMAN NEGARA SAVED FROM ROAD

Taman Negara, one of Asia's best-known and most important national parks, has been saved from the road-building project reported in the last bulletin. The road, designed to improve the area's attractiveness to tourists, would have caused serious environmental damage, particularly to the Tahan River Valley, which is an important part of the park. Following campaigning by non-governmental organizations in Malaysia and the preparation of alternative development proposals, the road plan was dropped at the end of 1986. (Source: Oryx April 1987).

Status and Conservation Needs of the Bali Starling

The author considers the plight of Bali's only endemic bird, and the options open to conservationists to ensure its future survival.

The Bali Starling Leucopsar rothschildi is the only endemic bird species on Bali, Indonesia, where it is now limited to an area of approximately 6,000 ha on the island's extreme north-west tip. The wild population was estimated at 125-180 individuals in 1984, possibly in two isolated sub-populations. In sharp contrast, the total world captive population is about 1000 birds, of which some 450 are in the USA.

The monotypic genus Leucopsar is closely allied to some South-East Asian starlings - Black-collared Sturnus nigricollis, Vinous-breasted S. burmannicus, and Black-winged S. melanopterus, and the genus of mynas Acridotheres. Of these allied species, Black-winged Starling and White-vented Myna Acridotheres javanicus occur on Bali; other Balinese sturnids are: Asian Pied Starling S. contra, Philippine Starling Aplonis panayensis, Short-tailed Starling A. minor, and Hill Myna Gracula religiosa. The Bali Starling is characterized by a rather heavy, deep bill, yellow-grey in colour, bare cobalt-blue orbital skin, a pure, snow-white plumage with a black terminal bar to all rectrices and primaries, and a long, erectable occipital crest. It also has strange forwardly directed notches on the inner vanes of its primaries - a characteristic found in the Sturnidae only in two definitely unrelated African species of glossy starling Lamprotornis. Male and female plumages are exactly alike, but males are on average slightly larger and heavier built, and their crest is slightly longer.

The species' natural habitat resembles Afrotropical large-grass savanna with isolated groups of trees or palms (known as tree- or palm-savanna), or a more closed woodland. It is mostly found in the undergrowth of the trees, or in the fringes of the adjacent closed monsoon-forest. The dominant tree in the tree-savanna is the white-barked, flat-crowned 'pilang' Acacia leucophloea while the palms are 'lontar' Borassus flabellifer or 'gebang' Corypha utan. Other frequent tree species are 'kemloko' Phyllanthus emblica, 'tekik' Albizia lebbekoides, 'kesambi' Schleicheria oleosa, 'intaran' Azadirachta indica, 'bekol' Ziziphus nummularia, 'walikukun' Schoutenia ovata, and 'talog' Grewia koordersii. The tall-grasses are mostly Heteropogon contortus, 'alang-alang' Imperata cylindrica, and Saccharum spontaneum. The Bali Starling is not limited to this tree-savanna and is sometimes seen even on coral flats between mangrove-regrowth at low tide (they seem to bath in the sea water left behind in the numerous crevices).

The Bali Starling's diet consists of insects, small reptiles, and fruit, including those of the widespread and, in the tropics, well-known shrub Lantana

camara. Insects, however, especially large species, seem to be the major component, but composition varies with availability and season.

North-west Bali experiences a relatively dry monsoon climate with a distinct rainy season from January to April in the lowland (the mean annual precipitation is 1000 mm, of which 80% is in the rainy season). There is virtually no surface fresh water on the peninsula and rivulets are at best highly ephemeral.

The Bali Starling, its breeding season coinciding with the rainy season, nests in tree-holes. In captivity, and probably also in the wild, the normal clutch size is three eggs. In captivity, incubation takes 10-16 days, followed by a fledging period of 22-24 days. Fledglings start to feed independently at 4-5 weeks, while complete independence is reached at 6-7 weeks. Breeding pairs probably produce one young per year in the wild. The only potential nest-competitor is Black-winged Starling which outnumbers the Bali Starling throughout its range and breeds in tree-holes from January to June.

Bali Starling Leucopsar rothshildi (drawing by Craig Robson)

Although Stresemann, the collector of the type-specimen in 1911, remarked that the bird seemed to be very rare[1], Baron von Plessen observed hundreds in 1925[2]. There is more confusing information about the population level in the first quarter of this century, but the Bali Starling's distribution had undoubtedly shrunk dramatically by the 1960s and the population had dangerously

declined. The main cause seems to be development of agriculture in the bird's range on Bali's north coast.

In 1966 the Bali Starling was included in the Red Data Book and the species has been protected under Indonesian Law since 1970. The nature reserve, established in 1947, has recently been enlarged from 20,000 ha to 70,000 ha and now has the status of a National Park. Wardening, though far from perfect, has improved since the mid-seventies and helped to establish encouraging population levels.

The early reduction of the bird's range seems to have set the limits and conditions for the bird's present status. More recent and direct factors influencing the population are poaching (for export for the cage bird trade), illegal firewood-cutting, and recurrent fires. Competition from the Black-winged Starling, especially for nesting opportunities, may also have an effect. An absolute shortage of trees of suitable girth and species, and of habitat, as a result of fire and wood collecting, seem to be other factors.

A population level of about 50 breeding individuals is widely considered an absolute minimum threshhold, below which genetic drift and inbreeding will impoverish the population and reduce its chances of survival[3]. If one considers that not all birds nest in any one year, the existing wild population hovers close to the threshhold. Clearly, conservation measures are urgently needed as a breeding population of about 50 is an absolute minimum, and one of about 500 is normally accepted as a more healthy minimum to ensure the long-term survival.

The American captive population numbers 450 birds - some still recently taken from the wild - distributed among some 50 collections, mostly zoos. Since a change in legislation in 1980, active exchange between collections has been made much easier and has avoided large-scale inbreeding in the captive population. In 1984, a Bali Starling Studbook was compiled, largely covering the American population. Some zoos have been successful in breeding fifth generation Bali Starlings and seem to have contained the problems of inbreeding and genetic drift.

Reintroduction of captive-bred Bali Starlings into their original environment is one of the options suggested by the ICBP Bali Starling Project Phase I (1983-84). To that end, American captive-bred Bali Starlings will be shipped to a captive propagation centre in Indonesia, most likely the Surabaya Zoological Park. Offspring of these American Bali Starlings will be directly released, either into the Bali Barat National Park, or at another location to establish a feral, reserve population. In both cases recently fledged young (4-5 weeks old) will undergo a period of familiarization to adapt to life in the wild. The second option avoids most of the danger associated with reintroduction: the sudden spread of contagious, lethal diseases (e.g. avian pox), amongst the wild population; and unwanted, premature genetic mixing. Should it be considered necessary, birds from the feral, reserve population can be transferred to the original population in a more controlled way, and in a manner which better adapts them to wild conditions.

However, potential sites for a feral population are scarce: Baluran National Park (north-east tip of Java), Blambangan Nature Reserve (south-east tip of Java), Nusa Penida Island (south-east of Bali) or Saobi Nature Reserve (160 km north of Bali). At each of these locations, despite the best of intentions, the release of Bali Starlings will involve an alien faunal introduction. All the sites

belong to the Javan zoogeographical area, except Nusa Penida Island, which seems to be a little more closely related to Lombok - beyond Wallace's Line - than to Bali. Moreover, by establishing a feral population, the Bali Barat National Park's uniqueness regarding the Bali Starling is lost, which may distract the attention of the policy-makers, and undermine arguments for the park's preservation. In addition, although widely applied elsewhere[4], (re)introduction is still a subject for further investigation[4].

A second option is to operate a nestbox programme in the wild. As an experiment, 24 nest boxes were installed for the 1985 season, but owing to the late start of Phase II of ICBP's Bali Starling Project no results have been obtained. However, it is planned to expand the number of boxes to 100-150 for the 1987 season. Finally, habitat improvement (planting of food trees, reunification of habitat patches) and nature education of villagers surrounding the Park are further aspects of the Species Survival Plan.

Since reintroduction is a long-term effort (initially five years are necessary), project funding for a captive propagation centre and a pre-release training and demonstration centre at the Bali Barat National Park is now the major problem. Training personnel in genetically sound captive propagation (record keeping, pair-selection) and continuous monitoring of the wild population, including the effects of released captive-bred birds, will also require funding.

The Bali Starling balances on the brink of extinction, and yet, from the population-genetic viewpoint its position is by no means hopeless. The improvements in wardening in the Park are promising, and providing sufficient funding is forthcoming, the Bali Starling could survive in the wild. Let us pray that Bali's single endemic bird species does not share the fate of the Bali Tiger: extinction!

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3. Frankle, O.H. and Soule, M.E. (1981) Conservation and evolution Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

4. IUCN (1984) The IUCN position statement on translocation of living organisms. Introductions, re-introductions and re-stocking.

Bastiaan van Helvoort c/o Benden Beekloop 48, NL 5662 HM, GEKDROP, The Netherlands or c/o Taman Nasional Bali Barat, Kantor Pos Gilimanuk, Gilimanuk-Bali, Indonesia.

Mixed Species Bird Flocks

What are mixed-species bird flocks? Which species join them, and why? In his article on this exciting aspect of Oriental ornithology, Paul Jepson attempts to provide a few of the answers.

"The twigs were everywhere vibrating and foliage rustling with the movements of birds, scraps of bark and dry leaves were everywhere falling, and every now and then I was fortunate enough to witness an obvious attack on some flying or falling insect".

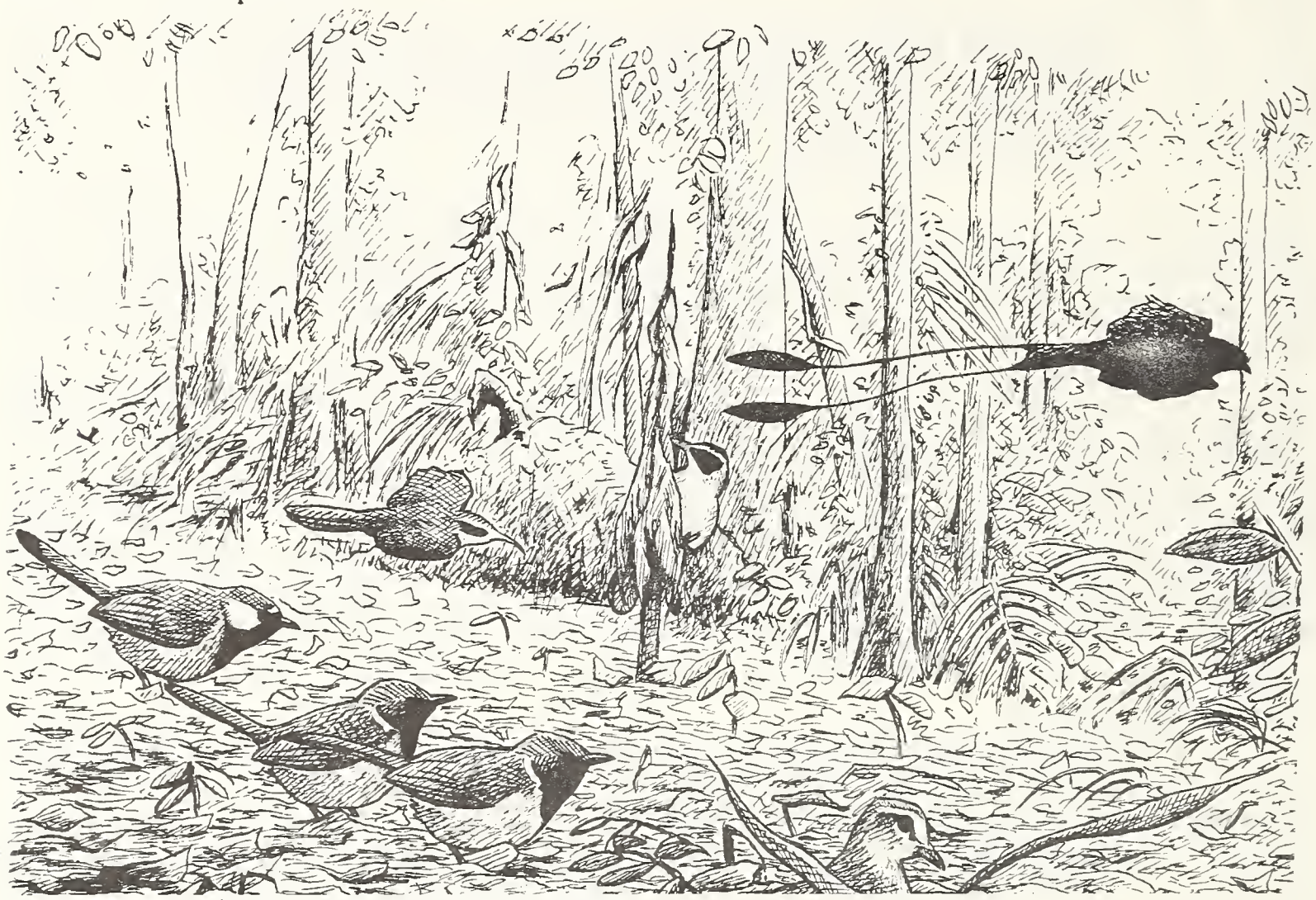
This passage by Swynnerton[10], although describing his experiences in the forests of Burma, will almost certainly strike a chord with those who have birdwatched in the forests of any part of the Oriental region. For, these flocks, often embracing ten or more species from several genera, and sometimes including over 100 individual birds, are a characteristic feature of tropical-forest avifauna. Because of the speed with which they frequently move, and the inherent problems of watching in dense forest, these flocks are an exciting challenge to the field skills of the lay observer. However, they also present a number of problems for scientists, concerning their purpose and the nature of their composition.

The days of dismissing such associations of birds simply as a result of an 'inbred gregarious urge' are long gone. It is important to look for the selective advantage enjoyed by an individual from associating, not only with conspecifics, but also with individuals from different species and even different families. The study of these mixed-species bird flocks will undoubtedly provide a valuable contribution to our understanding of the factors involved in the structuring of animal communities, and also provide interesting examples of avian communication and behaviour.

The species involved

A number of studies have been undertaken on tropical-forest bird flocks, particularly in the Neotropics, but very few have been carried out in the Oriental region. For the researcher the problem of collecting reliable data on large, relatively loose flocks moving through the dense, often tall forest vegetation is a very real one. This may explain why they have not proved more popular as a subject for research. Data collected on the species-composition of 141 flocks, observed during visits to Malaysia, Thailand, India, and Nepal, form the basis of this paper. Some of the ideas presented are largely speculative, but it is hoped that they will encourage a greater interest in the subject and inspire birdwatchers to take notes on their observations, the value of which they may not have realized.

The bird flocks under discussion are typical of forest habitats, both primary and secondary, and vary markedly in composition, both in terms of numbers of individuals and of species. The largest and most diverse flock reported to the author was seen by C. and T. Inskipp at 1800 m on the slopes of Pulchowki, central Nepal in the autumn of 1986. This comprised 32 species from one non-passerine and ten passerine families, totalling at least 150 individuals. Often, the flocks are much smaller, and may involve as few as ten individuals of three or four species.



On the Move (drawing by Craig Robson)

In the four countries mentioned above 204 species from 27 families (following the classification in King et al.[4]) were recorded in mixed flocks. In Thailand and Malaysia, where the bulk (121 flocks) of the data was collected, the species-numbers were 165 and 26 respectively, involving 20 passerine families out of the 31 which occur in the two countries. Of the remaining 11 families nine either occupy 'open' habitats e.g. wagtails and pipits Motacillidae, are aerial birds e.g. swallows Hirundinidae, or are represented by a single species e.g. whistlers Pachycephalidae. Of the remaining two, parrotbills Panuridae are known to join mixed-species associations elsewhere in the Orient (particularly in the Eastern Himalayas), while pittas Pittidae occupy a forest-floor niche that is incompatible with the flocking process.

Thrushes Turdidae are not 'good' candidates on the list of flock-members since they are recorded infrequently in associations and are, perhaps, not part of the flock but simply foraging in its pathway. At present, however, they are included because of the behaviour of four Grey Bushchats Saxicola ferrea,

recorded in a flock consisting of seven Long-tailed Minivets Pericrocotus ethologus, one White-browed Shrike-Babbler Pteruthius flaviscapis, three Blue-winged Minlas Minla cyanouroptera, six Inornate (Yellow-browed) Warblers Phylloscopus inornatus, six Rufescent Prinias Prinia rufescens and a male Little Pied Flycatcher Ficedula westermanni, in the open pines above Ang Khang, north-west Thailand. On the other hand shrikes Laniidae have not been included in the list, but it would not be surprising if Tiger Shrike Lanius tigrinus were found associating with forest-edge flocks in Malaysia.

The structure and purpose of flocks

All flock members are partially insectivorous, and most species are completely so. Gleaners, i.e. species which take their prey from the surface of foliage, such as Phylloscopus warblers, tend to have a relatively high number of individuals of each species within the flock. Species with a specialized feeding method, like the flycatchers Muscicapidae, tend to be represented by only one or two individuals in a flock, though a number of species may be present. A major study by Moynihan[7] in the Neotropics showed that mixed flocks (with a predominance of forest-edge species), contained what could be termed as 'nuclear' species and 'attendants'. The nuclear species were invariably gleaners foraging in mono-specific flocks which other species followed. Some species simply joined the flock as it passed through their territory, while others remained with it for longer periods. Stanford[9] in Burmese forests noted that flocks took the same daily route, while studies in Sri Lanka in the forests of Yala National Park, tend to confirm this pattern (W. Thilanlia pers. comm.).

It is likely that flock-structure varies from area to area, and also that the advantages conferred by membership of a mixed-species flock may vary for different participating species. It is generally agreed that birds benefit from a reduction in predation pressure or from an increase in foraging efficiency. Proponents of the decreased predation advantage argue that a flock is likely to detect a predator earlier than would an individual, that grouping reduced the likelihood of the individual being detected, and that a mass response, be it sudden flight or vocalizations, may confuse the predator.

It is very difficult to prove, especially in forest situations, if individual flock members do in fact benefit from reduced predation. I have seen only one potential avian predator near a flock; this was a Collared Owlet Glaucidium brodiei following a flock of fulvettas Alcippe, yuhinas Yuhina, and sunbirds Aethopyga in eastern Nepal. I have never recorded a bird strike, but a strike by a hawk Accipiter, for example, happens so quickly that many hours of observation would be necessary to assess the frequency and success of these attacks. MacDonald and Henderson[5] showed that mixed warbler Sylviidae and tit Paridae flocks in Kashmir were predated upon by Northern Sparrowhawks Accipiter nisus, and that this resulted in behavioural responses, including the flock reversing its direction of movement.

Some interesting observations regarding predation have recently been published by Munn[8], from the Neotropics. In the flocks he studied there was a 'sentinel' species which gave an alarm call at the sight of a hawk. This species occupied a 'fly-catching' niche, feeding on insects flushed by other flock members. If the sentinel and an individual of another species were pursuing the same insect the sentinel gave a false alarm call, thus distracting its competitor;

as Munn says, this is a case of a bird 'crying wolf'.

Croxall[2] noted that in Sarawak there was a real scarcity of potential predators on the flocks. In particular there is no raptor regularly hunting under the closed canopy of the forest. Although in certain regions a flock member may benefit from reduced predation pressure, it is my view that the primary advantage is an increase in foraging success.

In tropical forests the insect fauna is extremely diverse and enjoys a wide variety of protective adaptations. These adaptations include crypsis (camouflage), warning coloration and mimicry of this, rapid-escape mechanisms, and chemical defence mechanisms. Insect species are widely dispersed with no single species in abundance, and so an insectivore feeding on a cryptic species has a wide range of potential prey with no one prey-species predominating. Indeed, Fogden[3] suggested that the long period of parental care (often 6-7 months) found in Sarawak-forest insectivores, was probably related to the need to provide their young with sufficient time to learn how to find and recognize the great variety of cryptic insects upon which they feed.

Babblers and sunbird in thick undergrowth (drawing by Craig Robson)

It is quite easy to see how flocking could facilitate the feeding of component species during the course of foraging. A cryptic insect only has to move to lose its camouflage. Similarly, an individual bird is likely to flush insects which it is not itself adapted to take or in the correct position to catch, but which could be snapped up by a nearby conspecific or by a species specializing in a different niche (e.g. a flycatcher). Both Croxall[2] and Fogden[3]

came to the same general conclusion that the association of a number of species would ensure a more efficient exploitation of a forest insect food-source and that the primary function of mixed flocks is to facilitate the foraging of component species. Croxall[2] suggests that all species contribute, in different ways, to the flushing of insects.

Future studies may well prove this last statement to be a generalization, and that reciprocal flushing of insects in a mixed flock will only operate between birds of the same genus, within gleaning families such as the cuckoo-shrikes Campephagidae, babblers Timaliidae and warblers Sylviidae. Genera specializing in aerial capture of insects such as Muscicapa and Harpactes appear, from my observations, to be present in small numbers and well-spaced in any particular flock, although a number of different species from a single genus may be present. It seems likely that they are gaining from insects flushed by other species, but it is doubtful that their method of foraging would benefit these other species with reciprocal flushing of insects. They could simply be commensal with other flock members and might offer the possibility of better predator-detection. Certain genera, such as fantails Rhipidura, might even aid flock-cohesion through their coloration, vocalization, and behaviour.

Families such as woodpeckers Picidae, nuthatches Sittidae and treecreepers Certhiidae, all occur regularly in mixed-species flocks, but it is unlikely that they could gain the advantages described above owing to their particular niche. Cody[1] and Morse[6] suggest that joining a flock will reduce the risk of wasting effort on areas recently searched by other birds, and this may be the reason for their occurrence in mixed flocks.

To conclude I hope this broad discussion will provide an introduction to the biology of mixed-species flocks, and that it will add to readers' appreciation of this exciting aspect of Oriental-forest ornithology. I should be very interested to hear from anyone who has observations or thoughts on this subject.

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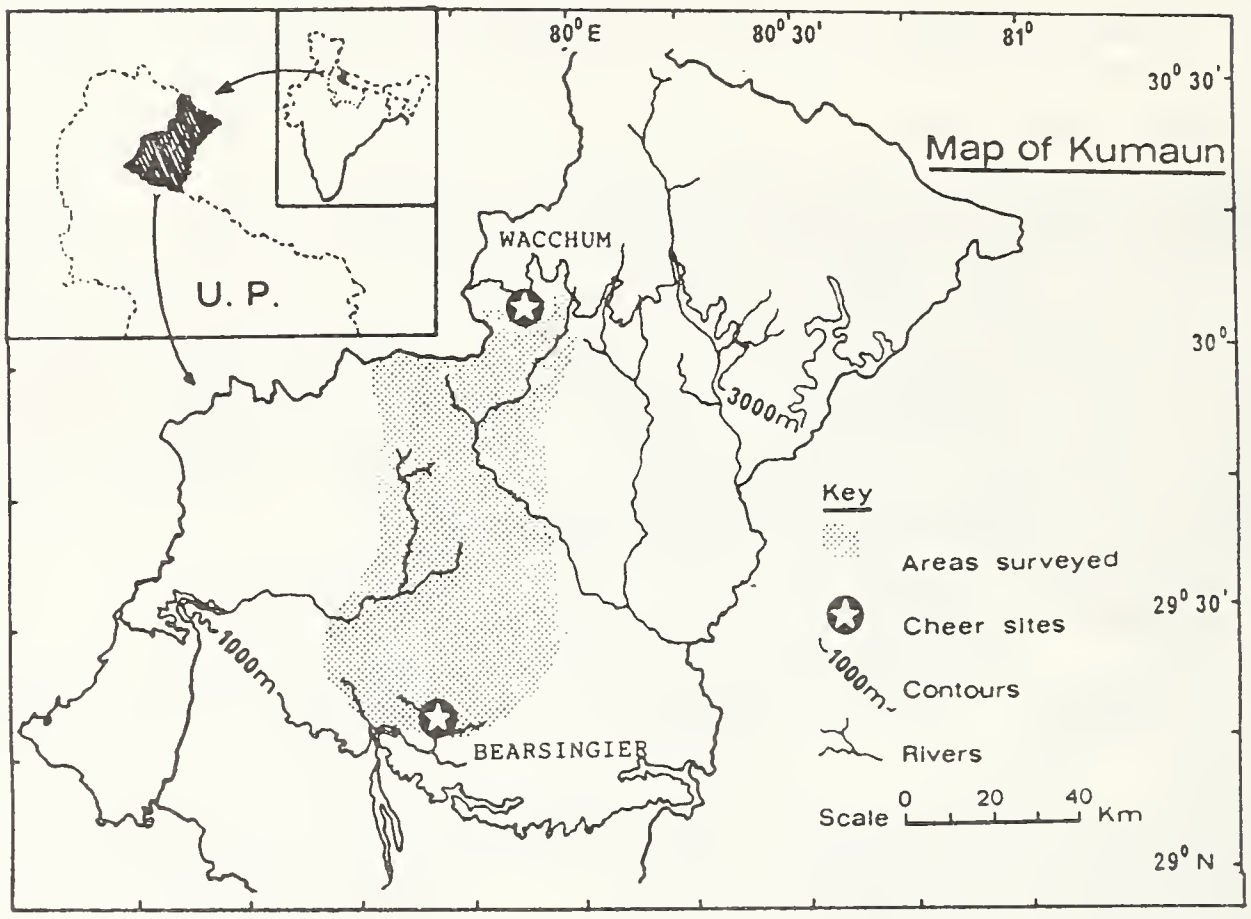
Studying Cheer Pheasants in India

In Bulletin No. 2 (Autumn 1985) we gave some details of new research initiatives on behalf of the endangered Cheer Pheasant Catreus wallichi in the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh (U.P.).



In October 1985, as planned, Lew Young and Rahul Kaul started survey work in the Kumaon Himalaya (just west of Nepal) in an effort to locate additional wild populations, and with a view to selecting an intensive-study site. Over the next five months numerous places in Almora and Naini Tal Districts were visited, largely on the basis of local advice, in order to inspect habitats, search for birds, and listen for calls at dawn and dusk. In the event only two of over 30 sites visited definitely held birds. A few other promising areas are now (February 1987) being visited by Rahul Kaul and Musaid Iqbal, the second Indian Ph.D. student to join this project. Whatever they find, the Cheer can only be said to be in a precarious situation in this sector of the Himalaya, as in all other areas within its range. There are a few reputed sites in the adjacent Garhwal area to the north-west, which we may have an opportunity to explore further in the next nine months or so.

A brief November visit to the upper Pindari Valley in Almora District, only 35 km south of Nanda Devi 7940 m, gave Lew and Rahul their first good views of Cheer: a group evidently consisting of several adults and some young of

the year. In March 1986 they established a fieldwork base in a house close to the village of Wacchum at about 2440 m on the south-facing side of the Pindari Valley.

Down towards the river the hill-slopes are dominated by terraces used mainly for growing wheat. However, immediately above most of the houses in this area there is a belt of scrub, usually at least 500 m wide, which is periodically harvested for firewood and then burnt, ploughed and planted with buckwheat ('pappa') for just one season. Then the scrub bushes Spiraea, Berberis, and Indigofera are allowed to regrow for 10-15 years before being cut again. Local domestic stock keep this scrub habitat very open at ground level for much of the year (October - May), but during the monsoon (June - September) they are led to high alpine grazing ('buggial'), and the ground vegetation in the scrub habitat becomes luxuriant.

It is in this scrub that the resident Cheer, as well as a thriving population of Kalij Pheasant Lophura leucomelana, and a few pairs of Chukar Partridge Alectoris chukar, spend their time. During the winter they are joined by Impeyan Pheasant Lophophorus impejanus and Koklas Pheasant Pucrasia macrolopha. We also know from finding fresh feathers that the Satyr Tragopan Tragopan satyra lives not far away in adjacent mixed oak/conifer forests. The presence of all these Galliformes certainly makes this area special, but the future does not look bright. Relatively pristine habitats extend for a distance of only 15-20 km south from the heads of valleys under Nanda Devi, and most of Almora District south of here is heavily overgrazed and/or deforested. There clearly is a danger of losing yet another east-west corridor for wildlife if man's intrusions are allowed to advance further and further up these valleys.

Cheer share their scrub habitat, at least at Wacchum, with a substantial Kalij population. So whilst Rahul Kaul continues to observe the details of Cheer behaviour and ecology during 1987, Musaid Iqbal is to do the same for Kalij since just as little seems to be known about this species. These twin studies should also reveal the nature of any interaction between the two species (and the other species present for some of the time).

There are also plans to set up further intensive studies of Galliformes: one somewhere near Simla in Himachal Pradesh, with Virinder Sharma, a Ph.D. student at the Punjab University (Chandigarh); the other on Red Junglefowl Gallus gallus within the campus grounds (and in collaboration with the staff of the Wildlife Institute of India) at Dehra Dun, Uttar Pradesh, not far from the sites where Nicholas and Elsie Collias conducted the only previous substantial field-study in the early 1960s, of this very important species.

Peter Garson is about to leave for a three-month trip to India, during which he will spend some time at the Wacchum study site.

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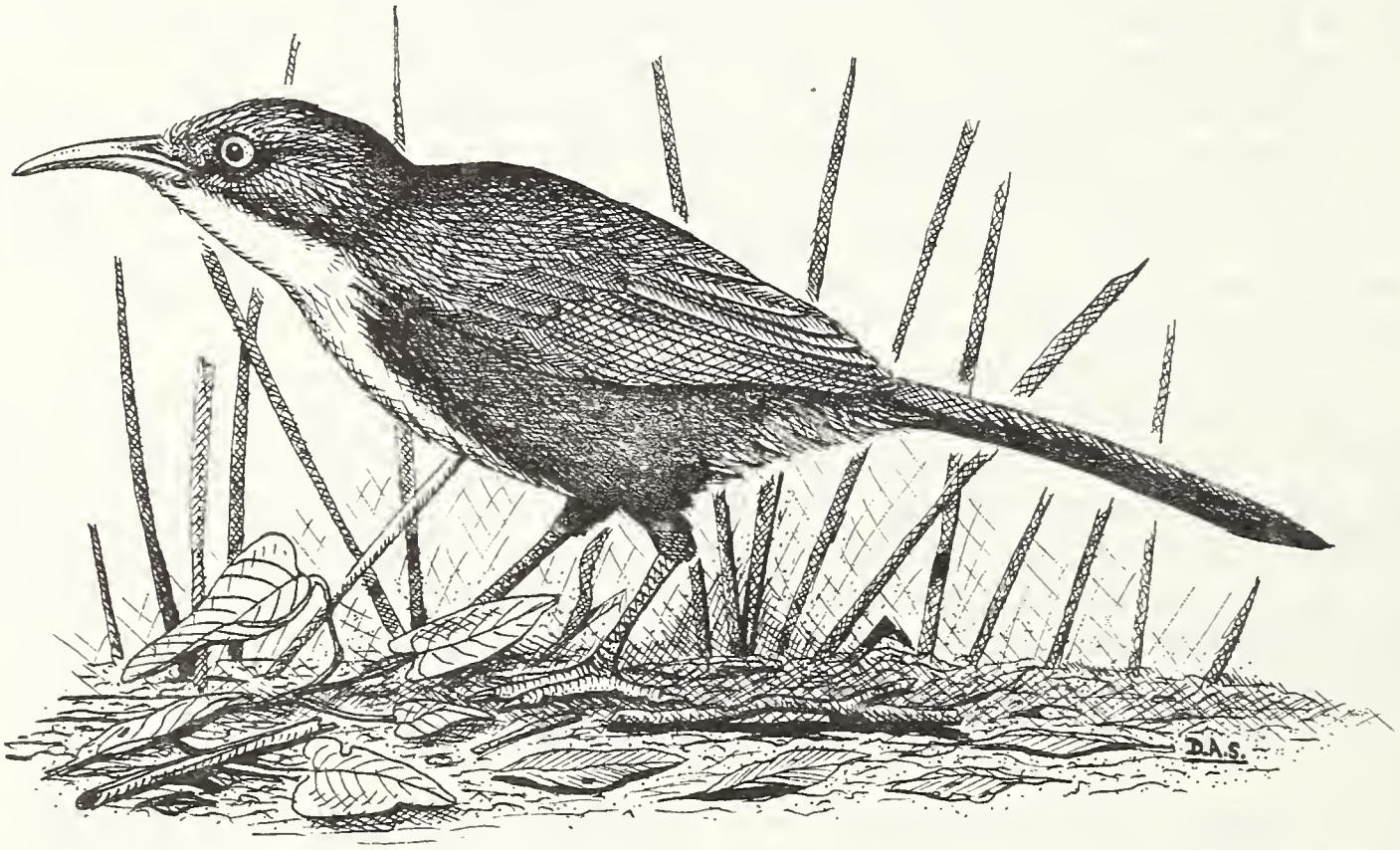
Birdwatching areas

AROUND ISLAMABAD, PAKISTAN

Mark Mallalieu outlines the most exciting bird-sites around Pakistan's modern capital.

Islamabad, established as the capital of Pakistan in 1961, is situated 1,100 km north of the coastal city of Karachi and lies close to the boundary between the Palearctic and Oriental regions - but is actually within the latter. It is surrounded by open country, with the Margalla Hills National Park flanking its northern edge and Rawal Lake immediately to the south-east, both of which are excellent areas for birdwatching. They can be easily reached by car from anywhere in Islamabad, and for those without their own vehicle, large numbers of privately run minibuses and saloon-car taxis are readily and cheaply available. Maps of Islamabad can be purchased fom bookshops to help plan your exploration of the surrounding area.



Rusty Cheeked Scimitar-babbler Pomatorhinus erythrogenys (by D. Showler)

The rugged Margalla Hills are accessible by foot, being only five-minutes walk from the road which skirts the northern side of Islamabad. A useful guide

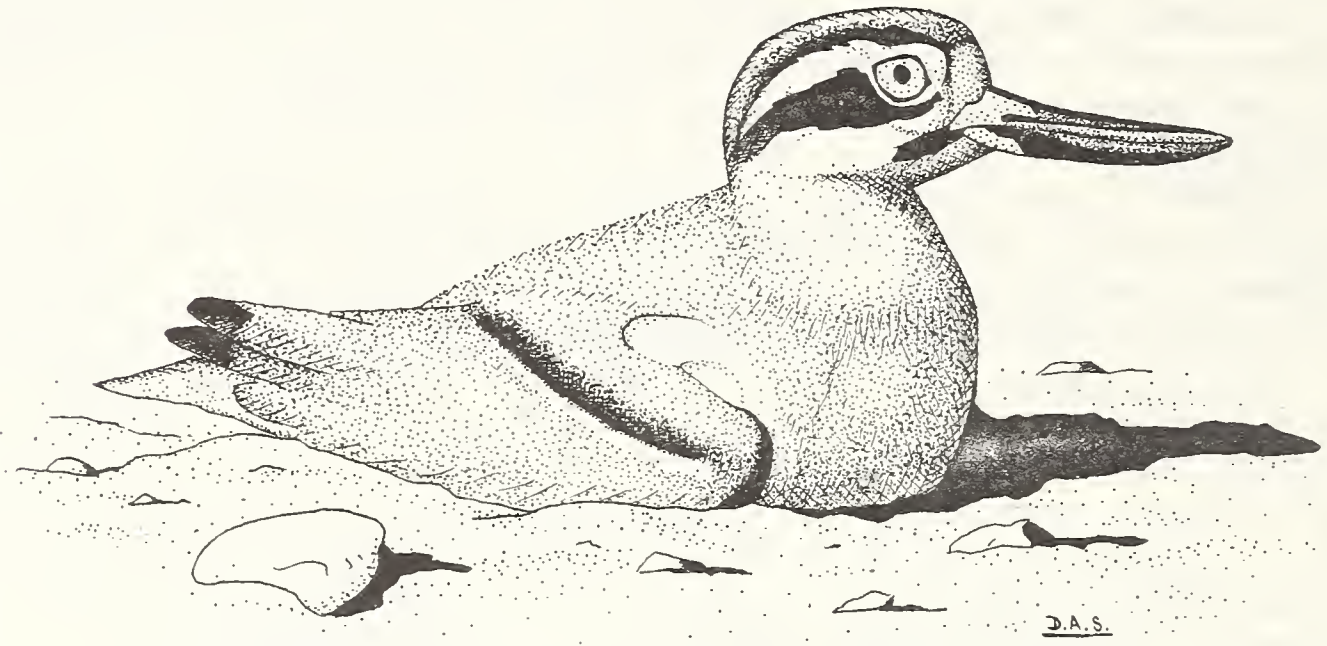
to hiking in the hills is published by the Asian Study Group (contactable through your Embassy if you are a visitor to Pakistan). The hills are cut by steep ravines which are thickly vegetated and rich in birdlife. At lower levels the vegetation type is subtropical dry semi-evergreen forest, including Acacia modesta, Dodonaea viscosa, Carissa opaca, Justicia adhatoda, and Ziziphus nummularia. Near the ridges (up to 1580 m) there is subtropical pine forest of chir pine Pinus roxburghii. Cheer Pheasant Catreus wallichi has been exterminated but is the subject of a reintroduction project, while Kalij Pheasant Lophura leucomelana has survived in the ravines. The duets of the Rusty-cheeked Scimitar-babbler Pomatorhinus erythrogenys and calls of the Blue-throated Barbet Megalaima asiatica are among the most characteristic sounds of spring in the hills. Other noteworthy species, all probably breeding, are Indian Pitta Pitta brachyura, Blue-throated Flycatcher Cyornis rubeculoides, Black-chinned Babbler Stachyris pyrrhops, Variegated Laughingthrush Garrulax variegatus, Grey Treepie Dendrocitta formosae and three species of Nightjar Caprimulgus, including European C. europaeus.

At migration times the ravines, as well as parks and gardens, teem with Phylloscopus warblers. Greenish P. trochiloides is abundant, while at least nine species occur, including Green P. nitidus and Brooks's Leaf P. subviridis. Passage of Blyth's Reed Warbler Acrocephalus dumetorum, Red-throated Flycatcher Ficedula parva and Common Rosefinch Carpodacus erythrinus can involve large numbers. As the sun rises on spring mornings conditions for migrant raptors become ideal. A 'skywatch' will reveal a steady, though small, passage of Crested Honey-Buzzards Pernis (apivorus) ptilorhyncus, Northern Sparrowhawks Accipiter nisus and Marsh Harriers Circus aeruginosus. The persistent watcher can expect to be rewarded by the appearance of rarer species such as Cinereous Vulture Aegypius monachus.

Roving mixed flocks of insectivorous birds characterize the winter scene. Lemon-rumped Phylloscopus proregulus and Inornate Warblers P. inornatus, Great Tits Parus major and Bar-tailed Treecreepers Certhia himalayana are typical. A dry stream-bed in woodland opposite the Italian Embassy on the Margalla hill road is particularly good, holding three species of Fantail Rhipidura, sometimes Golden-spectacled Warbler Seicercus burkii, and twice in the 85/86 winter, Black-lored Tit Parus xanthogenys. In the ravines and hills look for Rufous-breasted and Black-throated Accentors Prunella strophiata and P. atrogularis, Golden Bush-Robin Tarsiger chrysaeus, Grey-winged Blackbird Turdus boulboul, Chestnut Thrush T. rubrocanus and Dark-throated Thrush T. ruficollis.

Rawal Lake's wooded and reed-fringed northern shore can be reached by driving about 3 km along the Murree Road and parking by a small bridge, where a dirt track leads south through the trees. A five-minute walk along the track will bring you to the lake. Cattle and Little Egrets Bubulcus ibis and Egretta garzetta, as well as Black-crowned Night Heron Nycticorax nycticorax breed here in the trees. In summer, watch out for Cinnamon Bitterns Ixobrychus cinnamomeus and also singing Clamorous Reed Warblers Acrocephalus stentoreus. The eastern shore is reached by driving past the dam on the Lehtrar Road and turning left following a sign to the National Institute of Health (NIH). Turn left again just after the NIH and 2 km beyond you will reach an expanse of open fields leading down to the lake. The lake's depth fluctuates widely, and if

mud is exposed migrant waders will be attracted, while Great Stone-plover Esacus recurvirostris and Small Pratincole Glareola lactea may breed. Duck numbers are not exceptional, but Mallard Anas platyrhynchos and Northern Pintail A. acuta can both exceed 1000 in March; rarer ducks include Smew Mergus albellus and Common Merganser M. merganser. As you walk across the fields keep an eye out for larks Alaudidae, pipits Anthus, warblers Sylviidae and buntings Emberizidae, especially in autumn. Seven species of pipits occur including Rosy A. roseatus and Red-throated A. cervinus.



Great Stone-plover Esacus recurvirostris (drawing by D. Showler)

A less picturesque but equally fascinating winter trip is to a series of rubbish dumps 2 km out along the Lehtrar Road beyond the turning to the NIH. Steppe Eagles Aquila rapax nipalensis are numerous, and you may find Tawny A. r. vindhiana or Imperial Eagles A. heliaca. In spring Yellow Wagtails Motacilla flava of the race leucocephala have appeared.

Finally, although outside the scope of this article, there is a number of exciting day or weekend excursions one could make to explore the coniferous forests of the Murree hills and the lakes of the Salt Range.

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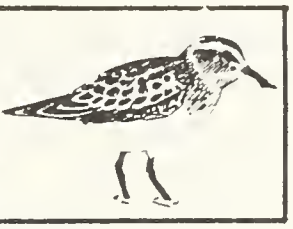
An annotated checklist, The Birds of Islamabad, Pakistan and the Murree Hills, which is published by the Asian Study Group is available from OBC Sales, price £1.50 including postage and packing (Eds.)

Little-known Oriental Bird



THE SIND SPARROW

In the first of a series, which will examine some of the lesser-known Oriental birds, Richard Grimmett looks at the Sind Sparrow Passer pyrrhonotus, confined almost entirely to Pakistan.

The sparrow genus Passer is not one to inspire the imagination of many birdwatchers, and a superficial glance at a picture of the Sind Sparrow Passer pyrrhonotus is unlikely to kindle great interest. Yet unlike its familiar congener, the House Sparrow P. domesticus, which has a nearly global distribution, the Sind Sparrow has an extremely restricted range, making it worthy of special attention.

Pakistan has no completely endemic species. Sandwiched between the Indian Subcontinent and the Middle East, its avifauna is a blend of Palearctic and Oriental elements and very few species have their main distribution in the country. However, the Sind Sparrow is almost endemic, being virtually confined to the flood plains of the River Indus and its major tributaries. It is absent from the arid mountainous country of Baluchistan, the Salt Range, and the Himalayan foothills.

Like the House Sparrow, it has benefited from the activities of man. Apparently rare at the beginning of the century, this species has spread as a result of the extensive irrigation schemes which have transformed the plains of Pakistan and created lengthy waterways, reservoirs and seepage tanks. In the north-east it has spread along the Indus tributaries, the Sutlej and Ravi Rivers, into north-west India; in the extreme south of the country, T.J. Roberts has recorded it in tamarisk Tamarix scrub at the Indus delta. Surprisingly (in view of its association with the Indus River), there also appears to be an isolated population in extreme south-east Iran.

The species' favoured habitat is tamarisk and acacia Acacia groves, sometimes mixed with tall grass and reeds, that border the rivers, canals, reservoirs, and seepage tanks. Interestingly, there are two other little-known species which are confined in Pakistan to the Indus flood plain, the Long-tailed Prinia Prinia burnesii and Jerdon's Babbler Moupinia altirostris. All three

species can often be seen in the same area (such as along the canal running south from Khaipur in Punjab). Yet these two other species do not appear to have extended their range in Pakistan, remaining extremely local, and are possibly threatened.

A glance at the "Handbook"[1] or the "Pictorial Guide"[2] will reveal that both male and female are similar to the House Sparrow P. d. indicus in appearance. Yet the male Sind Sparrow is distinguishable by its noticeably smaller size, small and clearly defined black throat-patch, and a broader and richer chestnut band on the sides of head and nape. The female is almost identical, but appears cleaner and more strikingly marked with a broader and more conspicuous creamy-white supercilium. The female differs from female Spanish Sparrow Passer hispaniolensis by the lack of streaking on breast and flanks and a smaller bill. The call and song of the Sind Sparrow are different to those of House Sparrow, being higher-pitched, more varied and musical and perhaps even finch-like. The song occasionally contains short warbling twitters and whistles, and in its variety recalls Eurasian Tree Sparrow P. montanus and (of relevance to non-Oriental readers) even European Greenfinch Carduelis chloris.

The Sind Sparrow is more arboreal than House Sparrow and is thought to be more insectivorous. Although the Sind Sparrow is basically non-commensal it is known to co-exist with House Sparrow, sometimes forming joint foraging flocks, and occasionally nesting in the same vicinity, where human habitation and riverine vegetation meet. But, whilst the House Sparrow will build in holes in buildings or occasionally trees, the Sind Sparrow always nests in the open and in a tree hanging over water. Breeding, which is loosely colonial, appears to take place in April and again during the monsoon. The nest is typically built in an acacia tree, is spherical and untidy, with an entrance hole at the side near the top. The four (occasionally three) eggs are similar to those of House Sparrow. The young are apparently fed mostly on caterpillars.

The subtle and interesting differences between Sind Sparrow and House Sparrow make the former a bird well-worth searching for, and such a quest is usually rewarded since it is easily found in suitable habitat within its restricted range.

Acknowledgements

Much of this article is based on material kindly provided by T.J. Roberts from his book, currently in preparation, on the birds of Pakistan.

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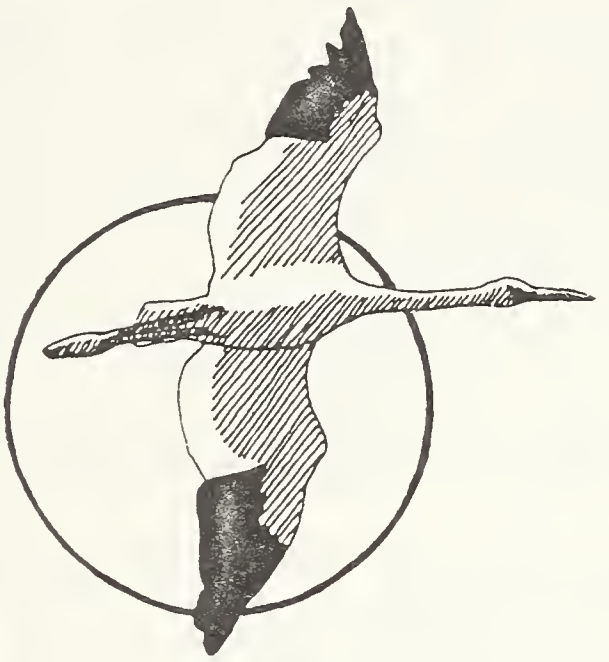
Reviews...Reviews.....

Williams M.D. (Ed), 1986. Report on the Cambridge Ornithological Expedition to China 1985. pp.133; 27 figs, 4 tables, 25 vignettes, 2 black & white photographs. Scarborough: Cambridge Ornithological Expedition to China. £8.50.



This 1985 expedition to Beidaihe, a coastal town 300 km east of Beijing in the Hebei province, was planned as a follow-up to the work of the late Axel Hemingsen, who made an extensive study of the migrants that pass along this narrow coastal plain flanked by mountains, between 1942-1945. The eight-man Cambridge team was based at Beidaihe from 15 March to 1 June 1985 with the hope of producing data to be used for assessing population changes in migrants since Hemingsen's time, and to act as a basis for assessing future population trends. Their records included a staggering 244 Red-crowned Cranes Grus japonensis, 652 Siberian Cranes Grus leucogeranus, 132 Great Bustards Otis tarda, and sightings of a swift Apodidae sp which may be new to science.

The expedition results are presented in this 133-page report. So often expedition reports contain a mass of unsynthesized data presented in an abundance of tables and histograms that the reader has little hope of deciphering. In total contrast, this well-produced and succinct report can be read with pleasure from cover to cover.

After some introductory notes there are short chapters on the habitats at Beidaihe, methods, timing of movements and routes used by migrants, a weather synopsis, correlations between weather and migration, and short notes on certain groups such as cranes, raptors and waders. This is followed by over 50 pages devoted to an annotated systematic list of the 285 species recorded, including notes on status, where possible, abundance and any change in abundance since Hemingsen's day. This is followed by rarity descriptions, and notes on hazards faced by migrants in China, including results of surveys in bird markets.

This is a good report, well-designed and illustrated, and a contribution to what is possibly the most neglected area of Chinese ornithology - migration. My only quibble is that at £9.90 (inc p&p) it is rather over-priced.

Jonathan Eames

Ali, S. 1985. The Fall of a Sparrow pp.256; 71 b&w photographs; Oxford; Oxford University Press. £10

At the end of his autobiography Salim Ali suggests the importance of the English language in India, both as a unifying factor in so heterogeneous a nation, and as a way of enabling Indians to keep abreast of scientific and technological advances in other parts of the world. Such views are a measure of the unconventional outlook that has characterized his ornithological career, and also serve to illustrate the open-minded approach that he has to life in general.

It is fitting that one who advocates the value of the English language should himself be gifted in its usage. However, it is not just Mr Ali's easy and natural style of prose which makes this book such a pleasure to read. Written almost completely from memory, and spanning over eighty years, his account of an age when hunting and the study of wildlife were far from mutually exclusive, and when the international community of ornithologists was more like an extended family than the unwieldy bureaucracy we know today, makes a fascinating story. Equally attractive are his almost impish sense of fun and the deeply modest way in which he seems to have accepted and laid aside the honours and adulation that governments, conservation organizations, scientific bodies throughout the world, and, in particular, his own countrymen, have showered him.

I pause briefly to quibble with one or two of his statements concerning the life of Richard Meinertzhagen, of whom the author presents a thumb-nail sketch in chapter 11. But this is simply a reviewer's pedantry. 'Fall of a Sparrow' is the tale of one of the world's great ornithologists, and as he recounts the events of his long life and his development from shikhari and would-be big-game hunter, to ornithologist, ecologist, conservationist, author and ornithological guru one gains a full sense of his restless and innovative spirit - a spirit that has become a symbol of Indian conservation.

Mark Cocker

White, C.M.N. & Bruce, M.D., 1986. The birds of Wallacea (Sulawesi, the Moluccas and Lesser Sunda Islands, Indonesia): an annotated check-list. pp.524; 16 tables and 5 maps. BOU Check-list No.7. £33.00

The area covered by this volume in the British Ornithologists' Union check-list series is that tropical, island-studded area lying between latitudes 5 N and 10 S. It is bounded on the west and north by the Eurasian continental shelf (upon which Bali, Borneo and the Philippine Archipelago are sited - west and north of Wallace's Line) while the Sahul continental shelf, with Australia and Papua, lies to the east and south. Within this area the avifaunas of tropical Eurasia and of

Australasia-West Pacific meet, overlap and mingle, thus forming a fascinating mixture of bird species. Altogether, 676 species have been recorded in this region, including northern and Australian passage migrants and off-season visitors, with no less than 243 species endemic to Wallacea.

The well-planned checklist begins with an 81-page introduction divided into several chapters dealing with such subjects as the taxonomic sequence and scientific nomenclature used in the systematic list (generally that of Peters' Check-list of birds of the world with such amendments as recent researchers have shown to be desirable), climate, vegetation, national parks and conservation, descriptive zoogeography, and a history of exploration. This is followed by the 344-page systematic list, giving for each species the scientific name, with its authorship and publication year, English name, Wallacean range, and, where applicable, the overall world range. Habitat details are given for many species, and there is substantial discussion of taxonomy at species, superspecies and species-group levels, as well as of individual subspecies relevant to Wallacea. A truly formidable, 56-page bibliography, prepared by the junior author, together with four appendices and two indices for scientific and English names, conclude the volume.

The foreword by the checklist-series editor, together with the junior author's preface, outlines the history of this volume's eight-year preparation and the complications caused by Charles White's most untimely death in 1978. The finished work is a great credit to the authors and has well served a most interesting part of the world with an avifauna of unique composition. It is the only modern treatise dealing with Wallacean birds in a consistent, modern fashion of broad taxonomic groups. The birds of Wallacea - fittingly dedicated to the memory of Alfred Russel Wallace, one of the greatest zoologists of the 19th Century - will be a "must" for the biological sections of museum and university libraries in Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, Papua New Guinea and Australia, not forgetting various research stations and institutes concerned with conservation. It will be the standard checklist for Wallacea for many years to come. For birders interested in the Malaysian and the Philippine avifaunas and wishing to follow up their species to the east and to the south, this checklist will be absolutely essential, together with the forthcoming Indonesian fieldguide being prepared by Murray Bruce.

D. T. Lees-Smith

Announcements & Requests

The New Face of Haribon Foundation

HARIBON FOUNDATION

When the Haribon Society decided on a fresh title three years ago, it expressed more than just a simple change of names. The new image was part of a larger transformation from a birdwatcher's society to one devoted to environmental awareness and conservation. The change of direction had much to do with the appointment, as the society's new president, of Celso Roque, who had held a number of government appointments prior to his acceptance of the position with the Foundation.

A quarterly bulletin entitled Enviroscope, together with a monthly sheet - Updated Bulletin - are sent to members to inform them of the latest developments within the Foundation, and also conservation issues in the Philippines.

The most important of their short-term aims are to widen membership and to take on a number of full-time office staff. They would also like to establish a track record for scientific research and attract sponsorship and grants to further their long-term goal in the Philippines of a 'sustainable utilisation of the country's natural resources'.

The fourteen-year-old Foundation took its original title - Haribon - from a Tagalog word meaning 'the king of birds': in their particular case, the Philippine Eagle Pithecophaga jefferyi. This is a deeply appropriate symbol, not only because it is one of the most magnificent and rarest eagles in the world, but also because the future of this bird involves the entire future of the Philippines' tropical rain forest.

If anyone would like to find out more about the Haribon Foundation and its work, they should write to: The Haribon Foundation, 5th Floor, Marietta Apartments, 1200 Jorge Bocoba Street, Ermita, Manila, Philippines, Tel: 592 932, 503-129.

Asian Wetlands Conference in Malaysia

From 23-28 February 1987, the historic coastal town of Malacca, Malaysia was the scene for a major conference on Wetland and Waterfowl Conservation in Asia, organized by the International Waterfowl Research Bureau (IWRB), Interwader, and the East Asia/Pacific Shorebird Study Programme.

Participants from 23 countries, mainly in Asia, attended the Conference, hosted by the Malaysian Department of Wildlife and National Parks. The meeting was primarily convened to bring together wetland experts, ornithologists, and government officials in charge of conservation, who are all currently involved in the Asian Wetlands Inventory (see Bull. Oriental Bird Club 4:25-26 for further details). It provided an excellent platform to report the progress made on the Inventory. No less than 16 of the 24 countries covered by the inventory were represented by their national coordinators or by major

contributors. During the conference, completed, draft inventories from Malaysia and Indonesia were handed round, the latter a particularly impressive eight-volume document covering well over 220 sites.

An important session during the conference was devoted to discussing the international and regional agreements on wetland and waterfowl conservation that are in force. So far, none of the South-East Asian countries has joined the Ramsar Convention, while India is the sole contracting party to the Bonn Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals. For this Convention to have a significant practical effect it is essential to have greater participation by Asian Governments.

During the course of the meeting, 30 papers were presented on a variety of subjects, including wetland surveys, waterbird studies, wetland development and land-use planning, and the protection and management of wetlands. One session was devoted to reporting the success of the 1987 mid-winter waterfowl census in the Indian Subcontinent, in which a large number of Indian and Pakistani ornithologists participated.

The Conference was extremely well organized and stressed the growing awareness among Asian countries of the importance of safeguarding wetlands and waterbirds.

Taiwan New Year Bird Count 1986

Covering more than 40 different routes, over 100 Taiwanese observers took part on an organized count on the 21 December 1986. The coordinated watch, which took place between 07h00 and 12h00, produced a number of interesting species, such as Northern Lapwing Vanellus vanellus in the Taipei area, a Pied Avocet Recurvirostra avosetta in the district of Taichung, and a Swinhoe's Pheasant Lophura swinhoii on Mt. Morison.

Anybody wishing for more information on the count should write to: Dr Peter Chen, Bird Count, Tunghai University, PO Box 814, Taichung City, Taiwan.

Where Have all the Baikal Teals Gone?

Although not widely appreciated, it appears that the Baikal Teal Anas formosa has dramatically declined in recent years or has changed its wintering areas. The population wintering in Japan has possibly declined from thousands to only a few hundred individuals, while searches of suitable wintering and passage areas in China such as Poyang Lake, Beidaihe and Xiang Hai have revealed only a handful of individuals or no records at all.

In an effort to assess the current status and determine its wintering range, all data on this species are being collated with a view to publishing an updated review in due course. If you have any records of this species, please send them to: Mark Brazil, 28 St John's Well Court, St John's Well Lane, Berkamsted, Herts, UK; or Peter Kennerley, c/o HKBWS, PO Box 12460, Hong Kong.

Information Needed from Nepal

All bird records from the less-visited parts of Nepal and any unusual records for the country are requested. The information will be used to update the distribution information in A guide to the birds of Nepal by Carol and Tim Inskipp (Croom-Helm 1985). The records are also needed for a study of the

status and conservation of Nepalese forest birds, part of the 1987 conservation programme of the Internatonal Council for Bird Preservation. The study aims to compile species inventories for the present protected areas; to identify the most important forests for birds which are currently unprotected; to make recommendations for survey work in the important forests which are little-known or unstudied; to make recommendations for the establishment of additional protected areas; and to assess the status of and threats to forest species. Please send information to Carol and Tim Inskipp, c/o Oriental Bird Club, The Lodge, Sandy Beds. SG10 2DL, UK.

Volunteers Wanted for Migration Survey in China

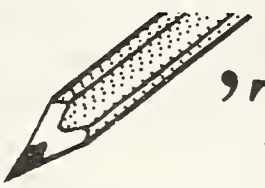
In autumn 1987 (Oct-Nov) Chinese ornithologists intend to study migration through the coastal town of Beidaihe in Hebei province. The survey will concentrate on recording large diurnal migrants such as cranes Gruidae, storks Ciconiidae, geese Anserinae, bustards Otididae, and raptors Falconiformes. In autumn 1986 a British expedition recorded 294 species, including large numbers of Oriental Storks Ciconia (ciconia) boyciana and Pied Harriers Circus melanoleucos; also 6 species of crane Grus, 47 species of wader, Relict Gulls Larus relictus and many Siberian passerines including 17 species of warbler Sylviidae and 16 species of buntings Emberiza (see Recent Reports for further details). It is hoped that some Western ornithologists would consider joining the survey for varying periods, both to increase the observer-coverage and to communicate their skills and enthusiasm to the Chinese workers. Volunteers must be prepared to pay their own expenses; however, assistance will be given with travel and accommodation arrangements. For further information please contact Dan Duff, c/o Pembroke College, Cambridge. CB2 1RF, UK.

Correction to Borivli Article

The editors wish to apologize to Mr Humayun Abdulali for an error in his article, "Borivli ... On the edge of Bombay", Bull. Oriental Bird Club 4, pp 12-13. Mr Abdulali has kindly pointed out that Malabar Lark and Malabar Whistling Thrush have been wrongly inserted in the following sentence:

"Until a similar biotope was found in the Surat Dangs about 160 km further north, Salsette Island constituted the northern limit of the Indo-Malayan avifauna, which includes species such as Malabar Parakeet Psittacula columboides, Malabar Trogon Harpactes fasciatus, Malabar Lark Galerida malabarica. Malabar Whistling Thrush Myophonus horsfieldii, Long-billed (Loten's) Sunbird Nectarinia lotenia, and Crimson-backed (Small) Sunbird N. minima.

He adds that both species have a range extending further north than either Salsette Island or the Surat Dangs.



'To the Editor'

The Importance of Iris Colour

I was interested to read in Bulletin No.4 Autumn 1986, the letter on page 28 by Mr A.H.J. Harrop about the iris colour of the Ashy Drongo Dicrurus leucophaeus observed in Nepal in March 1986. I can say from direct observation that there is no difference in the iris colour of adult birds of both sexes of the Ashy Drongo, and the Black Drongo D. macrocercus.

While living for seven years in Malir just outside Karachi, Pakistan, I had ample opportunity to compare the adult and young of Black Drongo since a pair was resident in my garden. Likewise I am familiar with the iris colour of the Ashy Drongo, since it regularly nests in the vicinity of Dungagali in the Murree hills where I spent many summers. In both species adults have crimson irides and young birds reddish-brown or even quite dull brown.

Over the years I have seen most of the other species of drongos Dicrurus inhabiting South-East Asia and if my memory serves me correctly all have crimson irides when adult, so that it could be considered a family characteristic. I am prompted to write this note, not by way of criticism of Mr Harrop's observations, but rather because I believe that the question of iris colour is fascinating and worthy of further observation. It is in my experience that eye colour is much more variable than some field guides indicate, or than the casual observer would suppose, with many examples of sexual dimorphism (the best-known examples being iris colour in the Black-necked Stork Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus and the Saddle-billed Stork E. senegalensis. But generally, irides change colour between juvenile and adult stages of development, and this is particularly noticeable in raptors. A good example of this is the very dark-brown irides of sub-adult European Honey-Buzzards Pernis apivorus and the pale-golden irides of older birds. There are also many examples of noticeable changes in the iris colour of birds during the onset of the breeding season, and particularly temporary changes associated with the bird's emotional state. This is true of a good many Ardeidae, whose iris becomes flushed orange or reddish at the onset of breeding, and the iris of the male Satin Bowerbird Ptilonorhynchus violaceus (of Australia) whose cobalt-blue iris can turn to an exquisite amethyst-purple when the bird is excited.

I have noticed similar colour changes in the irides of some of the Green Pigeons Treron of the Indian Subcontinent. The more information that can be recorded and published about iris colour in birds the better will become our understanding of possible physiological correlations which might exist between iris colour and the individual bird.

Tom Roberts, 'Cae Gors', Rhoscefnhir, Pentraeth, Anglesey, LL75 8YU, UK

Hong Kong: More than just a pimple

But for a Chinese anti-narcotics campaign early last century, Hong Kong would have presumably found its way into Jeffery Boswall's short article 'Notes of the current status of ornithology in the People's Republic of China' (Forktail 2 (1986)

pp 43-51). If in fact publication had been delayed to say Forktail 13 (1997) it would have been obligatory to have included Hong Kong. The point I am making is that Hong Kong is ornithologically and physically a most important part of China. It is merely a political accident that, to quote an oft-used Russian gibe, this 'pimple on the arse of China' is not indeed China.

Since Swinhoe visited the Colony in 1860 and published his findings (Ibis 1861: 23-57) Hong Kong-based ornithologists have been making valuable contributions to our understanding of Chinese ornithology. Momentum has been greater in recent years and since 1955 the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society has published an excellent annual report summarizing observations made in the Territory, culminating in Chalmers' Annotated checklist of the birds of Hong Kong, which was recently most favourably reviewed (Brit. Birds 80: 58, February 1987). This last publication includes a comprehensive, annotated bibliography of Hong Kong avifauna containing no fewer than 341 references: clear evidence that observers have been watching and recording Chinese birds and, more importantly, monitoring changes in status for well over a hundred years.

Now that the 'bamboo curtain' has parted and permitted foreigners like Jeffery Boswall and a few pioneering twitchers - under various guises, including outrageous pretensions to be academic expeditions - to enter the Middle Kingdom, a whole new breed of China experts has suddenly arisen. Wake up gentlemen, you're only part of something that has been going on for a long time!
Clive Viney, 87 Mount Nicholson Gap, Stubbs Road, Hong Kong

Saunders' Gull Mislabelling

It shoud be noted that the photograph of a gull colony reproduced on pp.150-151 of the book The continents we live on: Asia, a natural history, by Pierre Pfeffer (published in 1968 by Random House of New York) is not, as captioned, of a colony of Saunders' Gulls Larus saundersi but of a colony of Great Black-headed Gulls L. ichthyaetus, as is evidenced by the shape of the birds' heads and the all-grey chicks, besides other features. To the best of my knowledge and belief the nest of a Saunders' Gull has yet to be found.
Jeffery Boswall, Birdswell, Wraxall, Bristol, UK.

Raptor Counts from Kenting National Park, Taiwan

Every year raptor counts are made at Kenting National Park in Taiwan. The migration occurs in September and October, and the birds often roost for the night at the southern tip of Taiwan, then take advantage of thermal currents to carry them across the 400 km of the Bashi Channel to the Philippines.

A single-day count in 1978 produced more than 4,000 birds, while in 1984 there was a peak of 2,000, and in 1985 1,000. A count made on 11 October 1986 between 06h00-12h00 produced 804 birds, comprising the following species: 484 Chinese Goshawks Accipiter soloensis, 278 Grey-faced Buzzards Butastur indicus, 22 Japanese Sparrowhawks A. gularis, 8 Eurasian Kestrels Falco tinnunculus, 7 Peregrine Falcons F. peregrinus, 4 Crested Honey-Buzzards Pernis ptilorhyncus, and a single Hen Harrier Circus cyaneus.

Anybody wishing for more information on these counts and the migration should contact: Mr Liuchuan, Engineering Department, Kenting National Park, 272 Kenting Road, Heng Chun, Ping Tung, Taiwan or, Lin Chih-Cheng, Taiwan Fertilizer Company, PO Box 61, Miaoli, Taiwan, China.

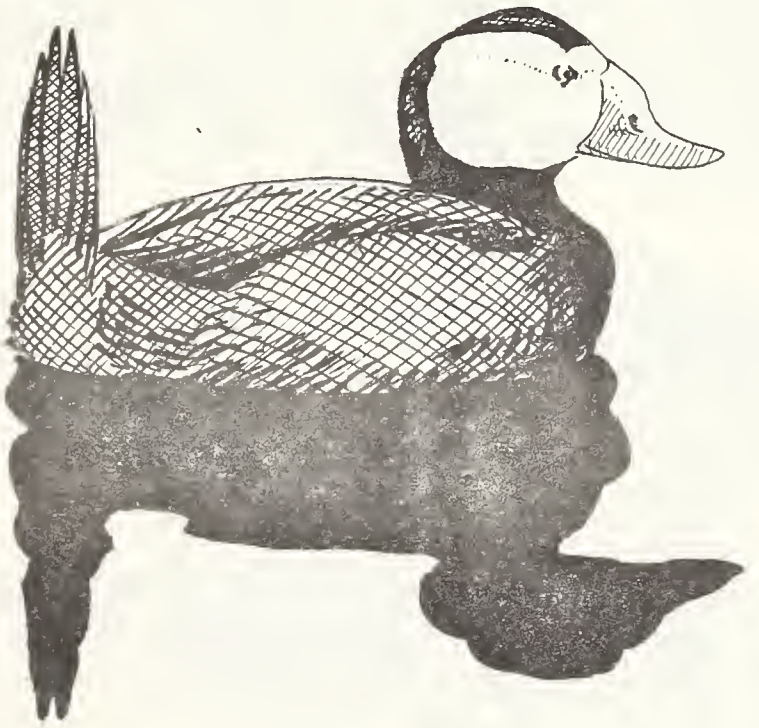
Recent Reports

These are largely unconfirmed reports. We urge that full details be supplied to relevant regional organizations in due course.

PAKISTAN

There have been two interesting records of Grebes Podiceps this January, possibly as a result of the very harsh weather further north in Asia. Two Horned Grebes P. auritus at Khabbeki Lake, Punjab on the 10th and four Red-necked Grebes P. grisegena at Rawal Lake, Islamabad on 15-16th are probably the first and third records for the Indian Subcontinent respectively (MM).

Other noteworthy records this January were a single Mew Gull Larus canus (5th for Pakistan) at Rawal Lake, Islamabad on 1-3rd (MM), and good counts of White-headed Ducks Oxyura leucocephala in Punjab, with 467 on Uchchali Lake and a further 68 on nearby Jhalar Lake, both on the 9th (MM).



White-headed Duck Oxyura leucocephala (drawing by Gary Wright)

CHINA

Some very encouraging news was received of the autumn 1986 migration at Beidaihe Hebei province (SS, GC). A grand total of 2,729 Oriental Storks Ciconia (ciconia) boyciana were recorded between 11 October and 16 November, representing more than twice the previous world-population estimates. Six species of Crane Gruidae were observed migrating through the area, mainly between late October and early November, with 4,434 Common Grus grus, 497 Red-crowned G. japonensis, 529 Hooded G. monacha, 152 White-naped G. vipio,

192 Siberian G. leucogeranus, 14 Demoiselle Anthropoides virgo and 1,503 unidentified cranes being recorded. The number of Red-crowned Cranes represents over 90% of the known, Chinese wintering population. Also noteworthy were 452 migrating Great Bustards Otis tarda between mid-October and early November, while 14,596 Pied Harriers Circus melanoleucos, which passed between 20 August and 17 October, probably represent the largest movement of any harrier species ever observed.

Good numbers of other diurnal migrants were noted, including 1,395 Grey Herons Ardea cinerea, 168 Black Storks Ciconia nigra, 1,896 Bean Geese Anser fabalis, 15 White-tailed Eagles Haliaeetus albicilla, 47 Rough-legged Buzzards Buteo lagopus, 415 Upland Buzzards B. hemilasius, 1,387 White-throated Needletails Hirundapus caudacutus, over 1,000 Eurasian Penduline Tits Remiz pendulinus, over 6,500 Chestnut-flanked White-eyes Zosterops erythropleura, 6,000 Richard's Pipits Anthus novaeseelandiae, 2,000 Olive Tree-Pipits Anthus hodgsoni, and 1,000 Hawfinches Coccothraustes coccothraustes. The numbers of Eurasian Penduline Tits and Chestnut-flanked White-eyes indicate large increases in populations since the 1940s. However, the numbers of Black Kites Milvus migrans, Great Bustards, Black Drongos Dicrurus macrocercus, and Rooks Corvus frugilegus recorded during autumn 1986 indicate significant population reductions.

Other interesting species recorded during the autumn's investigations included singles of Common Ringed Plover Charadrius hiaticula, Nordmann's Greenshank Tringa guttifer, Great Black-headed Gull Larus ichthyaetus, adult Relict Gull Larus relictus, Saunders' Gull L. saundersi, Brown Accentor Prunella fulvescens, and Wallcreeper Tichodroma muraria; also three Plain Laughingthrushes Garrulax davidi, and three Light-vented Bulbuls Pycnonotus sinensis.

INDONESIA

Information was received on two interesting nest records from Sumatra. The nest of a Yellow-bellied Pigeon Treron oxyura was discovered in the Padang highlands on 1 January 1987 and that of a Rufous-vented Niltava Niltava sumatrana at Gunong Kerinci on 26th December 1986 (FL, JH).

MALAYSIA

There were two records of Schrenk's Bittern Ixobrychus eurhythmus from Peninsular Malaysia in November 1986, one, which was caught, on Frazer's Hill on the night of the 7th (FL, CP), and another seen in flooded lowland forest at Kuala Lompat on the 10th (FL). Recent reports of this rare visitor to Malaysia suggest that it winters in lowland forest.

A single Storm's Stork Ciconia (episcopus) stormi at Kuala Lompat on 10 January 1987 was the first seen in the Krau Game Reserve since 1970 (FL). In East Malaysia, a single Common Starling Sturnus vulgaris at Kota Belud, Sabah in November 1986 (RL), was new for Borneo.

BRUNEI

There were three additions to the Brunei list during the latter half of 1986: Tufted Duck Aythya fuligula and Common Coot Fulica atra at the Wasan ricefields (CM, CO), and a Northern Lapwing Vanellus vanellus at Seria (DH).

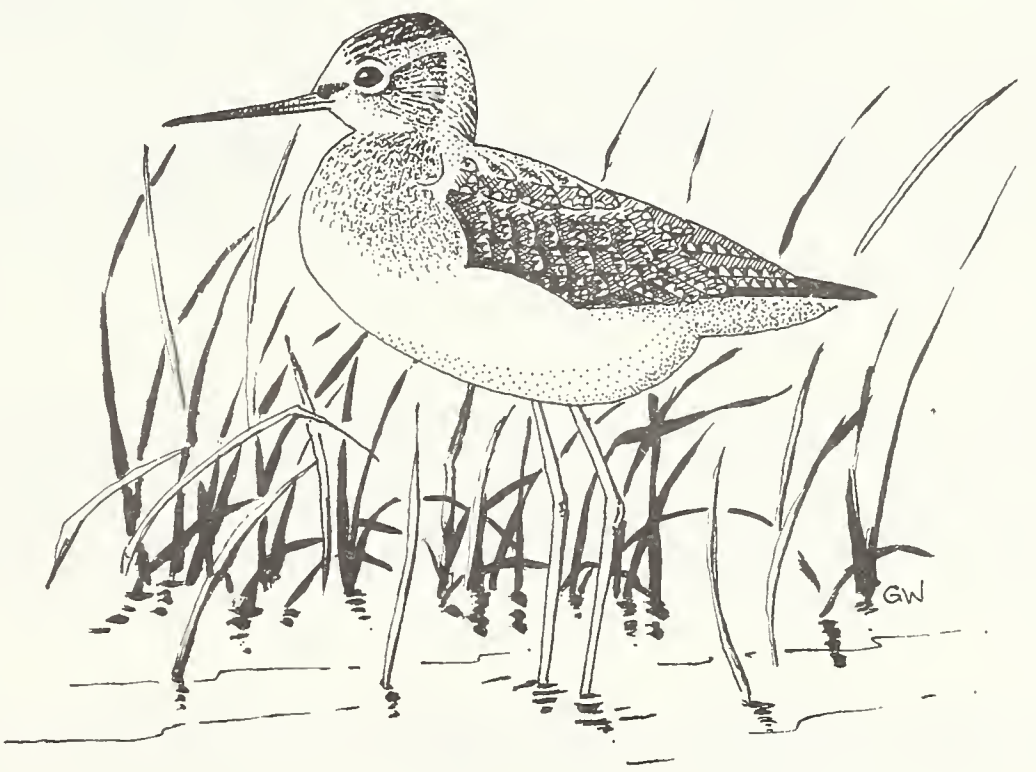
THAILAND

Exciting news of a nesting pair of Storm's Storks came from the Khong Saeng Wildlife Sanctuary, Chiew Larn Province in October 1986. The nest contained two young, and was situated in the top of a tall dipterocarp (SN). Not only is this a new bird for Thailand, but it represents a major range extension northward for this threatened species.

In December 1986 two male Gurney's Pittas Pitta gurneyi were seen briefly at two locations within the area discovered for this species earlier in 1986 (PR). A solitary Green Peafowl Pavo muticus, first reported from Beung Kroeng Kavia, Kanchanburi Province on 7th December 1986 by Khun Surachit (WP, SJ), was still present on 10 January this year (VK). It is the first to be reported from this area for many years.

Other good records last winter included an amazing concentration of Fork-tailed Swifts Apus pacificus, estimated at 250,000, roosting in a cave near Cave Lodge, north-west of Pai, Mae Hongson on 22 December (PH); 15 Alexandrine Parakeets Psittacula eupatria at Bhumibol Dam, Tak Province on 31 December (CV), the largest number recorded for many years of this very scarce species; an immature Slender-billed Gull Larus genei at Bangpoo on 25 January (BB); and a single Slaty-legged Crake Rallina eurizonoides seen in Huai Yot district, Trang Province on 6 December (PR, UT).

HONG KONG



Lesser Yellowlegs Tringa flavipes (drawing by Gary Wright)

During the summer of 1986 exploratory visits were made to the tern Sterna breeding areas in Mirs Bay. At the end of June there were over 25 Bridled Sterna anaethetus, 60 Black-naped S. sumatrana and 3 Roseate S. dougallii. The numbers of Bridled Terns were up on 1985 and those of the Roseate Terns down. A further count on 27 July produced 50 Black-naped Terns including 15 young at

the entrance to Tolo Harbour, while at Gau Tau there were 18 Bridled, 50 Black-naped and 6 Roseate Terns (AL).

After a memorable spring for new records, the autumn of 1986 turned up another four new birds for Hong Kong. The most surprising of these was a Lesser Yellowlegs Tringa flavipes, first discovered at Tsim Bei Tsui on 19 October and re-found at Mai Po on 2 November (PK et al) where it was watched by many observers and photographed. Also new were a male Thick-billed Pigeon Treron curvirostra, found dead after flying into a greenhouse wall at Kadoorie Farm on 9 November (GB, RB & KB per CV), a Black-necked Grebe Podiceps nigricollis in Yuen Long Creek, off Tsim Bei Tsui on 25 & 26 November (PK) and a dark-phase Daurian Jackdaw Corvus dauuricus on the 30 November at the Fence (RT).

Another possible first for Hong Kong, if accepted, was a Bull-headed Shrike Lanius bucephalus at Mai Po on 23 October (CL, JC & AT), (all previous records of this species having been relegated to Category F in the Annotated checklist of the birds of Hong Kong, fourth edition, 1986). A white-phase male Asian Paradise Flycatcher Terpsiphone paradisi was also recorded for the first time, in the Lam Tseun Valley from 26 October - 14 November (AC, PN et al & NT).

Other scarce visitors last autumn included a Crested Honey-Buzzard Pernis (apivorus) ptilorhyncus at Tsim Bei Tsui on 19 October (PK), 20 Spoon-billed Sandpipers Eurynorhynchus pygmaeus at Mai Po on 22 November (CV), a red phase Oriental Scops Owl Otus (scops) sunia at Sea Ranch, Lantau on 9 November (KP), two Lanceolated Warblers Locustella lanceolata at Mong Tseng on 21 September (CV, RF), and another found dead on the roof of the information centre at Mai Po on 31 October (DM) and a number of Purple-backed Starlings Sturnus sturninus, with a maximum of 15 at Mai Po on 2 October (CV). Two Streak-breasted Scimitar-Babblers Pomatorhinus ruficollis were heard above Pokfulam reservoir on 31 October (WY), in the same area where a sighting was made in April 1985. There are only two previous records, from nearby parts of Hong Kong Island.

TAIWAN

In August 1986 a Common Rosefinch Carpodacus erythrinus was new for Taiwan (details of locality not received). The Kaoshing Bird Society turned up two scarce visitors on 11 January, with four Bean Geese Anser fabalis at Fengshan Dam and a single Chinese Pond Heron Ardeola bacchus at Chengching Lake (per LCC).

Records were collated by Craig Robson from observations and contributions by the following: British Birds Tour (BB), G. Carey (GC), D. Harvey (DH), P. Hines (PH), Hong Kong Birdwatching Society Newsletter (KB, AC, JC, RF, PK, AL, CL, DM, PN, KP, GR, AT, NT, RT, CV, WY), J. Howes (JH), S. Jamonman (SJ), V. Kongthong (VK), F. Lambert (FL), R. Lansdown (RL), Lin Chih Cheng (LCC), M. Mallalieu (MM) C. Mann (CM), S. Nakhasathieu (SN), C. Ozog (CO), W. Pratumsat (WP), C. Prentice (CP), P. Round (PR), S. Stirrup (SS), U. Treesucon (UT), C. Vidthayanon (CV).

THE BULLETIN OF THE ORIENTAL BIRD CLUB provides a forum for news, notices, recent publications, expedition results, reviews, and preliminary or interim publication of studies on Oriental Birds by contributors from all parts of the world. Publication of interim results in the OBC Bulletin does not preclude or pre-empt publication of final results as journal papers either by the OBC or elsewhere. Contributions are considered by the Editor and an Editorial committee, with contributions accepted subject to editing and refereeing where appropriate. Copies of new journals, books or reports for mention or review are always welcomed. Contributions or enquiries should be sent to the Bulletin Editor, Oriental Bird Club, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Beds., SG19 2DL, UK.

Guidelines for Contributors

Whilst the Editor is always pleased to discuss possible contributions with potential authors, and to advise on preparation, it would be helpful if the following guidelines could be adhered to:

1. Articles These should be written clearly, preferably typed, on one side of the page, with all lines double-spaced, leaving wide margins. Articles for publication in the Bulletin should be no longer than 2000 words, accompanied in all cases by a concise summary. Scientific names should appear at the first mention of each species or, if all species appear in a table, they may be given there instead. Scientific names should, where possible, follow King et al. 1975 'A Field Guide to the Birds of South-East Asia'.

   Any tables to accompany articles should be prepared on separate pieces of paper, and be thoroughly checked. Titles of tables should be self-explanatory. Diagrams should be clearly drawn, in ink, ideally 15cm wide and 11cm high. References should be cited in alphabetical order at the end of the paper in the same style used in this Bulletin.

   It would be helpful if two copies of each contribution could be submitted.

2. Recent reports These should follow the format in the current edition of the OBC Bulletin, and be sent to C.Robson, OBC, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Beds. SG19 2DL, UK.

3. News/Information Typed or hand-written contributions should be sent to R.Grimmett, OBC, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Beds. SG 19 2DL, UK.

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1	CLUB NEWS	Meetings coming up-1987; Conservation Fund in action; People for Pittas T-shirt; Giro account number; bank accounts in India and USA; reports in 1986 AGM and Netherlands meeting; congratulations to Salim Ali; note on Sri Lanka information.
6	NEWS AND VIEWS	Richard Grimmett Birdcatching in Taiwan; still no hope for Houbara Bustard in Pakistan, Dihaila Jheel - paradise for birds; Relict Gull discovered in China; road planned for Taman Negara stopped.
9	FEATURES	Bastiaan van Helvoort STATUS & CONSERVATION NEEDS OF THE BALI STARLING
13		Paul Jepson MIXED SPECIES BIRD FLOCKS
18		Peter Garson STUDYING WILD CHEER IN UTTAR PRADESH
20	BIRDWATCHING AREAS	Mark Mallalieu Islamabad, Pakistan
23	LITTLE KNOWN ORIENTAL BIRDS	Richard Grimmett The Sind Sparrow
25	BOOK REVIEWS	China Cranewatch Expedition; fall of a sparrow; Birds of Wallacea.
28	ANNOUNCEMENTS	The new face of Haribon Foundation, wetlands and waterfowl conservation Conference, Malacca; Taiwan bird count 1986; Nepal records requested.
31	LETTERS	Importance of iris colour, Saunder's Gull mislabelled; raptor counts from Kenting National Park, Taiwan.
33	RECENT REPORTS	Craig Robson Pakistan, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, Thailand, Hong Kong, Taiwan.

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